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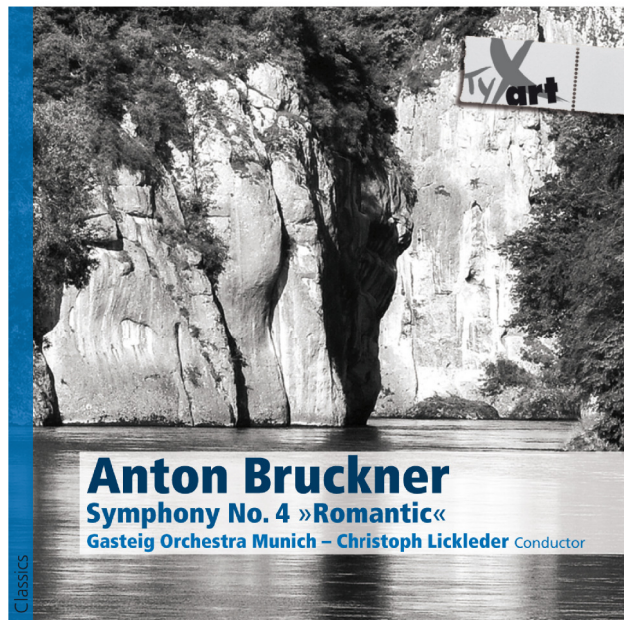
Anton Bruckner

Symphony No. 4

in E flat major »Romantic«

(version 1878/1880)

Gasteig Orchestra Munich
Christoph Lickleder, Conductor



Digital Release only [Series Classics]

Release 10/2013

Tracklist:

1. Bewegt, nicht zu schnell 22:27
2. Andante quasi Allegretto 17:28
3. Scherzo. Bewegt - Trio. Nicht zu schnell.
Keinesfalls schleppend 12:43
4. Finale. Bewegt, doch nicht zu schnell 25:50

Live Recording (06/2009, Kelheim/Germany)

Order No.: TXA13034

GTIN (EAN):



In the 1878/1880 version, Anton Bruckner's »Romantic« appears as a high point of Late Romantic Symphonic Music and sounds impressive in this live recording by the Gasteig Orchestra Munich.

Info Text in EN | | | | Total playing time: 78 min 30 sec | Series "Classics"



ANTON BRUCKNER
SYMPHONY NO. 4 IN E FLAT MAJOR "ROMANTIC"

In the symphonies of Haydn and Beethoven, the works with nicknames have always enjoyed a disproportionate level of popularity that eludes their "nameless" siblings, even though the names are usually not given by the composer. It is therefore not surprising that Anton Bruckner's Romantic, the name the composer himself gave to his Symphony No. 4, is also his most popular symphony. As an "aid to understanding", he also offered additional explanations in the form of programmatic illustrations, as we can see in his letter to the author Paul Heyse: "In my romantic Fourth Symphony, the horn in the first movement refers to the call that announces the beginning of the day at the town hall. Then life goes on. The second subject is the bird song of the great tit Zizipe. Second movement: song, prayer, serenade. Third movement: the hunt, and in the trio, the sound of a barrel organ playing during midday lunch in the forest." It is questionable to what extent these scattered hints justify the classification of Bruckner's symphony as a "program" symphony in the manner of Liszt or Berlioz. It is also significant that there are absolutely no programmatic references for the monumental finale, which occupies a full third of the symphony's playing time. Alternatively, one could view Bruckner's appeal to popular and romantic sounding nature references (and his enthusiasm for the Middle Ages) as an attempt to ingratiate the public with his new and monumental musical language. It was ultimately a successful attempt, as we can see from the Romantic.

Probably no work of Bruckner underwent more extensive re-writing than did the Romantic. The reception of his music has been affected by problems arising from the fact that his constant and ongoing revisions had resulted in multiple extant versions of many of his symphonies, versions that the composer himself sanctioned. A big reason for this situation was that rejection by critics, musicians and the public had a strong effect on the insecure composer, often sending him into deep depressions.

This factor alone may not explain everything, and just how much Bruckner was also motivated by his own artistic impulses will probably remain unresolved. Perhaps the best response of all would be to see the existence of multiple versions as containing equally valid individual formulations of Bruckner's musical ideas.

The problem of multiple versions becomes deeper when we also consider the serious changes in form, harmony and orchestration that were added directly to the scores by well-meaning friends, pupils, and conductors. Drastic cuts and adjustments to the orchestration that reflected the reigning Wagnerian ideals of sonority were intended to make Bruckner's music more easily digestible for the public. The composer himself often later authorized these intrusions, including those made to the Romantic, as we will later show. In this way, inauthentic versions remained in currency for decades and some conductors like Hans Knappertsbusch worked from spurious editions throughout their entire lives.

It was only in the 1930s that the first authoritative editions were made of Bruckner's works in their original form. Because of the new Complete Edition begun after the War, all of the alternative versions have now been made available.

Anton Bruckner began work on his Romantic symphony on January 2, 1874 and finished the first version in that same year. The date of completion was unusually meaningful in that it was November 22, which was the Feast of St. Cecilia, the patron saint of music. Perhaps it is not too much to speculate that the deeply religious Bruckner hoped that St. Cecilia would help his work to become established. But that year, unfortunately, was not a good one for Bruckner. He lost his contract at St. Anna's teacher training college and his attempts to land a position at the University of Vienna remained unsuccessful. In a letter from January 12, 1875, Bruckner described the precarious financial situation that resulted:

"I have only the Conservatory and that is not enough to make a living. In September, and also later, I had to raise money to avoid starving, which I did not like doing. Fortunately, some foreign students have arrived and have been taking lessons from me, or I would have had to go begging." His attempts at getting his Symphony No. 3 performed by the Vienna Philharmonic also came to naught, and Bruckner deeply regretted his move to Vienna.

In the second half of 1875, Bruckner's situation took a definite turn for the better. He accepted the post of assistant archivist and second singing master at the Hofmusikkapelle, and took up a position as lecturer in harmony and counterpoint (albeit unpaid for the time being) at the university. While attending Bayreuth Festival in 1876, Bruckner became acquainted with Wilhelm Tappert, a writer from Berlin. Tappert showed real interest in Bruckner's Romantic and expressed the desire to help get the work performed in Berlin. Bruckner also tried his luck with the Vienna Philharmonic once again but none of the hoped-for performances came to fruition. It was to take another 100 years for the first version of the Romantic to finally receive its first performance, which took place in Linz with the Munich Philharmonic in 1975 under Kurt Wös. In recent years, conductors (like Simone Young in Hamburg and Kent Nagano in Munich) have increasingly been advocating the unwieldy first version of the Romantic.

In 1876, after the provisional completion of his Symphony No. 5, Bruckner began his first major phase of reworking earlier works. Among the works he revisited was the Romantic, and Bruckner busied himself with that task between

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January and November of 1878. The work was cut down drastically (the finale alone went from 616 to 477 measures), and some passages with technical and rhythmic difficulties were made less problematic. It was precisely those elements that had earned Bruckner the reputation in the Vienna Philharmonic of being unplayable, but it was the kind of criticism that usually emerged from that orchestra when it was faced with any new or otherwise uncomfortable work. (At the end of the nineteenth century, they were still calling Schubert's "Great" Symphony in C major unplayable!) Bruckner also revised the orchestration by adding a bass tuba and making the woodwind parts, and especially the bassoon, less exposed than in the first version. The formal structure was smoothed out, allowing for longer stretches of music with fewer general pauses, and sudden dynamic contrasts were tempered in comparison with the craggy contours of the 1874 version. But above all, extended passages were newly composed, and Bruckner even replaced the original third movement with a new "Hunt" Scherzo.

The 1878 finale seemed a little too light-weight for Bruckner (he had given it the title "Volksfest"), and so, between November, 1879 and June, 1880 he came out with a third, final version of the Romantic. At 541 measures, the new final movement is notably longer than the one from 1878. Bruckner now rounded the symphony off in a more cyclic manner through references to motives from the "Hunt" Scherzo (for example, during the first big buildup).

He also brought back the Andante by inserting a funeral march-like episode during the second theme (exposition, beginning at measure 93). On the whole, the finale from 1880 differs so greatly from the previous versions, not least because of its darker, more dramatic character, that one should really consider it a new composition rather than merely a new version.

The 1878 version of the symphony, with the 1880 finale, was first performed by the Vienna Philharmonic under Hans Richter on February 20, 1881, and it turned into Bruckner's first great symphonic success in Vienna. However, the history of its successive reworkings was not yet over, and in 1881 the composer made some small changes, probably as a result of a performance on December 10, 1881 in Karlsruhe. In 1886 Bruckner attempted to have the work printed, but it was rejected by both Schott and Bote & Bock. In the same year, Anton Seidl, then working in New York, asked for the score to be sent to him, now giving Bruckner hope that the work might find a publisher in the United States. Before sending the score to Seidl, the composer made minor changes in the orchestration.

Now, he took the perfect fifth motive that opened the symphony and put it in the 3rd and 4th horns at the end of the symphony, although in practical terms the change is buried in the middle of the brass texture and is hardly perceptible. In 1953, Leopold Nowak, who was responsible for the new post-WW2 Bruckner Gesamtausgabe, was able to refer to a recently discovered score at Columbia University that contained these changes in Bruckner's own hand. It is this version that is heard in this recording, taken live from a concert performance.

Beginning in 1887, Bruckner once again made more revisions in anticipation of the symphony's publication by Albert J. Gutmann of Vienna. In comparison to the 1878/1880 edition, the new version contains some cuts such as the reprise of the main theme in the finale. Most of the differences are apparent in the orchestration: in the finale, a third flute (alternating with piccolo) is added, and the block-like orchestration of the wind parts, so redolent of organ registration, now gives way to a more blended Wagnerian sonority. This version was printed in 1889, but because of a great many printing mistakes, a second edition was rapidly prepared, appearing early in 1890. Since the 1930s, this version had been rejected as inauthentic by the majority of Bruckner scholars because it contained changes that were not by Bruckner, but rather went back to his student Ferdinand Löwe. More recent research, however, has proven that the copy used to engrave the 1888 plates had been thoroughly worked through multiple times by Bruckner and it is now assumed that he had also approved changes made by outside hands. The 1888 version is therefore included in the New Bruckner Edition.

(Thomas Müller)

CHRISTOPH LICKLEDER

Since 1981, Christoph Lickleder has worked with the Gasteig Orchestra Munich (members of the A-orchestras in Munich).

Their first important appearance was at the 800th anniversary celebrations for the city of Kelheim/Germany. From that time on, the orchestra became a very busy ensemble, with concerts of orchestral music, masses and oratorios, the latter partnered by the Choir of the Kelheim Musikvereinigung. This recording of Bruckner's Romantic comes from Lickleder's farewell concert as their music director.

Christoph Lickleder obtained his musical education at the University of Music and Performing Arts Munich and at the Universities of Munich and Regensburg/Germany.

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